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UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 001297

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DEPT FOR AF/FO, AF/E, INR/AA, DRL  
FOR DS/IP/AF AKORT  
FOR DS/DSS/ITA DROTHSTEIN  
PORT LOUIS FOR DUTY OFFICER  
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C O R R E C T E D COPY (DOWNGRADE OF PRECEDENCE)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: FORMER GENERAL ATTEMPTS "COUP" ACTION

REF: SIBLEY - OPS CENTER CONFERENCE CALL 11/18, 0915 LCL

¶1. (SBU) Former Army General Andrianafidisoa, also known as General Fidy, and 12 to 20 supporters made an unsuccessful attempt at a military coup from November 17 to 18 in Madagascar's capital of Antananarivo. Early November 17, General Fidy and supporters -- officers, enlisted, and militia known as "reservists" -- went to the Ministry of Defense to speak with the Acting Minister of Defense. Fidy delivered a letter and distributed fliers indicating his intention to install a military directorate. He was turned away and led his supporters to the Ivato Air Force Base near the civilian airport.

¶2. (SBU) The night of November 17 into November 18, Fidy and supporters made their way into the base with virtually no resistance and took one hostage and weapons. At about 0400 November 18, shots were exchanged with one soldier reported dead. Thereafter, Fidy and GOM General Raonenantsoamampianina, Head of the Army General Staff, reportedly began "negotiations." Fidy soon departed, leaving his lieutenant to continue discussions. Demands are unknown, but press reports November 18 say Fidy intended to install a military government, dissolve parliament and write a new constitution. Fidy is reportedly at large. Unconfirmed reports indicate stolen weapons were returned, hostages were released, and Fidy supporters vacated the base.

¶3. (SBU) Embassy Antananarivo has attempted to contact all senior government officials up to the President, as of 1230 November 18. None are available. As of 1230, all government public statements appear to be embargoed. PAS contacts say a statement is coming "soon." President Ravalomanana is in Mahajanga campaigning, but has delayed his appearance at a morning rally.

¶4. (SBU) Rumors in Antananarivo and provinces are rampant, in part thanks to Fidy's flier, which "thanks God for President Ravalomanana's government being down" and claims the military is now in charge. Local newspapers and radio are featuring this story front and center. In the absence of a GOM statement, the population is confused.

¶5. (SBU) The Minister of Interior is scheduled to speak in a PAS pre-election radio program November 18. The Minister's chief of cabinet confirmed the radio address would go ahead as scheduled.

EMERGENCY ACTION COMMITTEE MEETS  
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¶6. (SBU) Ambassador convened an Emergency Action Committee (EAC) meeting at 1045 to discuss the situation. The EAC decided not to issue a warden message at this time because the situation in the city was calm, with the population going about its Saturday morning shopping in a normal fashion with no evidence of enhanced security and because the existing warden message already warned American citizens to exercise vigilance and avoid crowds in the run-up to scheduled elections.

BIO NOTES

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¶7. (SBU) Army General Andrianafidisoa was the key military officer who helped Ravalomanana take control of the five remaining provinces outside Antananarivo during the 2002 crisis. Appointed and subsequently fired by President Ravalomanana from the positions of Chairman of the Board of SECREN (the shipyard in Diego) and Director General of OMNIS (the government's petroleum and mining agency), he has since expressed his hate for the President. His candidacy for the upcoming presidential elections scheduled for December 3 was revoked for failure to pay the deposit.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: General Fidy is retired and has no current official position in the GOM; however, he is respected and deferred to as "General" by military and civilians alike. In this way, he was able to access the base simply by walking through the front door. Post is disappointed the GOM has not made a public statement, which allows a wide variety of rumors to circulate freely. Post will continue to monitor the situation and report updates as the situation clarifies. END COMMENT.

MCGEE